1.0 In my capacity as Acting Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to UNON for the first-ever Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

2.0 Allow me first to thank you, Your Excellency President Kenyatta, for being with us this morning for the opening of this Assembly. Your presence here today is a strong manifestation of the close partnership between Kenya and the United Nations Organization.

3.0 This historic first UN-Habitat Assembly is taking place at a critical time for the United Nations, as the Organization implements global management reforms aimed at improving the delivery of efficient, accountable and cost-effective services. UNON, as a major service provider, is playing its part in these reform efforts, and will continue to support UN-Habitat as it plays a leading role in implementing the New Urban Agenda towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.0 This is also an important time for the Nairobi duty station, which is a vital hub for the Organisation’s operations and activities, and remains the only UN Headquarters in the developing world. The decision of the United Nations General Assembly to replace the previous Governing Council with the universal UN-Habitat Assembly is a further indication of the growing relevance of Nairobi as a global UN centre, from where an increasing number of UN entities are working to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – in Kenya, in the region and around the world.

5.0 That is why we are now moving forward with once-in-a-generation renovations to this beautiful UN compound. I am pleased that the UN General Assembly has already approved funding for UNON to proceed with the replacement of blocks A through J - the first offices constructed on this compound over 40 years ago. The UN General Assembly has also requested us to provide information regarding possible renovation work aimed at addressing the conditions and limited capacity of UNON’s conference facility, for presentation to the upcoming 74th session of the General Assembly.
6.0 As the global seat not only of UN-Habitat but also of the UN Environment Programme, we are also making efforts to lead by example and “walk the talk”, in terms of becoming a more environmentally-friendly compound. Last year, for example, UNON launched a waste collection and sorting station, with a view to reducing landfill waste generated from this compound and increasing recycling. UNON also became the first UN headquarters in the world to eliminate the sale of single-use plastics at our cafeterias.

7.0 I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my appreciation to the Government of Kenya for its steadfast support to the United Nations presence in Kenya as a whole.

8.0 I now have the honour of requesting your attention as we screen the video message of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to this Assembly.

Thank you.